

## Message Text

SECRET

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51

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 915

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T MUSCAT 248

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, UK, MU, JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN CHIEF OF STAFF EVALUATION OF OMAN WAR

REF: AMMAN 1264, LONDON 2798

1. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT SULTAN QABOOS, AND EQUALLY HIS BRITISH MILITARY COMMAND, HAVE HIGH REGARD AND HIGH HOPES FOR THE JORDANIAN SF BATTALION NOW EN ROUTE TO DHOFAR. SHOULD JORDANIANS INDEED PROVE TO BE REAL TIGERS, SO MUCH THE BETTER. AS TO WHETHER THIS BATTALION IS BEING ASSIGNED TOO TAME A DUTY, SEEMS TO US MORE PROFITABLE TO EXAMINE POSSIBLE REASONS WHY IT IS BEING ASSIGNED, AT LEAST INITIALLY, TO SALALAH-MIDWAY ROAD "GARRISON" DUTY RATHER THAN INSERTED INTO MORE FIERCELY CONTESTED WESTERN JABAL REGION. SURELY ONE FACTOR IS THAT SOME FIRST-HAND ORIENTATION INTO A NEW BATTLE ENVIRONMENT, ONE THAT DOES NOT RISK HEAVY, REGULAR ENEMY CONTACT AT THE OUTSET, MAKES SOUND MILITARY SENSE, ESPECIALLY IN SITUATION WHERE OVERALL MILITARY TRENDS ARE FAVORABLE AND NO SUDDEN EMERGENCY EXISTS. SECONDLY, WE SENSE SAF LEADERSHIP IS SOMEWHAT CHAGRINED AT HAVING ASSIGNED TO GREEN IRANIAN TROOPS IN DECEMBER THE TOUGH ROOTING-OUT PROCESS IN WESTERN JABAL, A TASK THAT PROVED FORMIDABLE AND COSTLY TO IRANIAN UNITS (AND ALSO DIFFICULT TO SAF ITSELF). RESULTANT SOUL-SEACHING AMONG SAF COMMAND MAY

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HAVE LEFT THEM HESITANT ABOUT COMMITTING ANOTHER NEW ALLIED

UNIT TO SUCH RUGGED DUTY AT OUTSET OF ITS DHOFAR TOUR.  
IN THIS SENSE WE SUPPORT LONDON'S COMMENT THAT ONCE JORDANIANS  
HAVE SHOWN SAF COMMAND THEIR METTLE ON THE SPOT, A MORE ACTIVE  
ROLE MAY WELL BE GIVEN THEM.

2. WHILE THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN WE, TOO, WONDER JUST HOW  
VIGOROUSLY AND PERSISTENTLY BRITS IN OMAN ARE PROSECUTING THE  
WAR, WE CAUTION AGAINST LEAPING TO ANY HASTY CONCLUSION IN  
THIS REGARD. WITHOUT QUESTION, BRITISH INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS,  
MILADVISERS AND UNITS IN DHOFAR ARE OPERATING UNDER SOME SORT  
OF CAVEAT, WRITTEN OR UNWRITTEN, TO BE PARTICULARLY CAUTIOUS  
AND KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN. WE SUSPECT THIS CAVEAT ARISES FROM  
CONCERN LEST UK PRESS AND MEDIA SUDDENLY REPORTED HEAVY UK  
CASUALTY LISTS FROM OMAN AND CAUSED PARLIAMENT AND PUBLIC  
OPINION AT HOME NOISILY TO DEBATE MERITS OF UK FORCES TAKING  
PART IN THIS FAR AWAY STRUGGLE. IN DEFENSE OF BRITISH MILITARY  
ROLE AND OPERATIONS HERE, ONE CAN CERTAINLY POINT TO A GROW-  
ING CRESCENDO OF SUCCESS, ALBEIT OVER QUITE SOME TIME, IN  
REDUCING DIMENSIONS OF ENEMY-HELD AREA, AND TO THE REAL ABILITY  
AND DEDICATION OF MANY INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS AND MEN THEY HAVE  
ASSIGNED HERE. THEIR SUCCESSES HAVE COME AGAINST AN APPARENTLY  
HIGHLY-MOTIVATED AND PHYSICALLY DURABLE HARDCORE BAND OF  
GUERRILLA ORGANIZERS AND TRIBESMEN WHO, WHILE PERHAPS ONLY A  
FEW HUNDRED STRONG AT THIS POINT, HAVE COLLECTIVELY PROVIDED  
FORMIDABLE OPPOSITION WHEREVER THE TERRAIN WAS TO THEIR  
ADVANTAGE; THEY MAY PROVE TOUGHER THAN EVER IN THE SHRUNKEN  
WESTERN AREA THEY STILL DOMINATE.

3. IT IS HARD FOR US TO ASSESS BEN SHAKER'S REMARKS ABOUT  
IRANIAN TROOPS, AS OUR INFORMATION ABOUT THEM HAS COME, LIKE  
HIS, FROM SECOND AND EVEN THIRD-HAND SOURCES. IRANIAN COMMAND  
AND FORCES IN DHOFAR HAVE CONSISTENTLY SHOWN PENCHANT FOR STICK-  
ING TO THEMSELVES, AS WESTERN NEWSMEN HAVE FOUND TO THEIR REGRET.

4. WITH JORDANIANS NOW HERE IN GREATER FORCE THAN BEFORE AND  
WITH ACTUAL COMBAT ELEMENTS, EMBASSY WILL ENDEAVOR TO  
INCREASE ITS REPORTING OF THEIR ROLE AND PERFORMANCE IN DHOFAR.  
AS OUR ACCESS TO DHOFAR MILITARY SCENE AT OTHER END OF COUNTRY  
NECESSARILY IS VERY LIMITED, WE WILL GO AT THIS MAINLY IN COURSE  
OF OUR REGULAR BRIEFINGS FROM AND CONVERSATIONS WITH SAF

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HEADQUARTERS PERSONNEL AND OTHER SOURCES IN MUSCAT.  
WOLLE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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